Orange County IBM PC Users' Group

nibbles & bits

august 2007

award winning monthly newsletter for orcopug members

AUGUST PROGRAM

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podcasts – a user's primer

presented by Mike Lyons
and Charlie Moore

answers to your questions

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feedback

Gary Covington, III
ORCOPUG member

Please check "Snopes" for suspicious emails that are FALSE — www.snopes.com/medical/toxins/cookplastic.asp and www.snopes.com/medical/toxins/petbottles.asp

Ted Wirtz
ORCOPUG member

If I ever have to reformat my hard drive, I'll give it a try (tip on page 15). It may be sooner than I like. WinXP restarts have a VERY nasty habit of corrupting my mirrored drive (RAID 0). I think Windows is shutting down before the data has finished writing to the second drive, leaving it in a corrupted state. If I look at the drive activity LED on my case, when I shut down, the screen says "Saving your settings" and then the LED is lit steady right up to the point that the power shuts off, or in a restart right up to the point the monitor blanks due to loss of video.

Microsoft claims that SP2 solved the problem of premature power off, but even though I have SP2 installed, I still get the corruption. Not every time but often enough to make it a real pain in the donkey. When it gets corrupted, the mirroring firmware always reports the corruption is too severe to rebuild, so then I have to break the mirror set, and create a new set. Then I have to guess which drive has the better data because the mirror is re-created by copying all the data on one drive to the other. So far I've been lucky. If I select drive 0 as the source and copy to drive 1 the result seems to be okay with no loss of data. I think the FAT on drive 1 gets corrupted. The FAT is the very last thing that gets altered when anything is written to a hard drive.

I THINK (but I'm not positive) the mirroring is accomplished in software rather than logic in the chip itself, which may account for the (assumed) longer time required to write to the second drive, which leads me back to the first problem again.

The RAID chips are made by Silicon Image. My motherboard (ASUS) uses the 3112A chip. Going to the SiI web site, the documentation advises getting my updates through ASUS, but ASUS has no updates beyond what came with the motherboard when I bought it. Of course the motherboard is discontinued, since it's a couple of years old now.

Charles Burgwin
ORCOPUG member

Al Gruber of SEMCO *(SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc.)* wrote a very interesting article on his adventures with Windows XP Registry, they somewhat paralleled my own adventures with that Registry. (Gruber's article is on page 10. —Ed.) Like Al Gruber I feel very cautious when it comes to running the automatic Registry fixes. I had a problem caused by System Mechanic.

Adobe Photoshop Elements 4 would not run after running System Mechanic on my Registry. Apparently Adobe programmers had not properly protected the CD Key and System Mechanic deleted it. The fix was to uninstall Photoshop Elements and reinstall. I have had other less serious problems with the Registry, but I have hesitated to make an effort to investigate and fix.

After reading Al Gruber's article, I feel inspired to put in that effort. I do have Acronis TrueImage 9 to backup and recover the previous state of Windows XP no matter how bad the Registry gets messed up.

I have a different Registry Fix-It software, I am using VCOM System Suite 7, which was previously Fix-It 6. VCOM is owned by Avanquest.

Neil Longmuir
WPCUSRGRP member

I was really lucky yesterday and was able to pick up a 512 mb stick of RAM from the same production run as the ones in my machine.

My existing system now has 1.5 gig and the speed has definitely gone up. I'm currently waiting for several of the dealers I know to decide which is the correct motherboard and processor for me. They all agree that it needs 2 gig of RAM and either the ATI 1300XT Pro or the ATI 1650XT Pro. They say both video cards will work great.

your favorite shot

Arundel

Arundel Castle is in West Sussex. It is occupied by the Duke of Norfolk and his family.

Photo by Ralph Seymour, ORCOPUG

As you might remember there was concern about the bee population, as they were slow to appear. My backyard was different. Large and small they came, for which I am duly grateful, along with the hummingbirds.

I have a neighbor who is a bit anti-tree because they drop leaves and he feels compulsed to rake or sweep them up. I don't feel that way and enjoy the natural messiness and the various creatures that come along. I wouldn't want to be on the wrong side of this insect as I am sure that it could make quite an impression. However, I think it's nice that it is out doing its job.

Photo by Carl Westberg, ORCOPUG

Everybody has a photo that they like a lot. Won't you please send us your favorite photo for our next "Your Favorite Shot" page? Email your photo as a low resolution 3"x4" or 4" x3" JPG to editor@orcopug.org. Please provide a short description of the photo or photo trick that you used to get it. Photo subjects can be whatever you choose.

technology and gadgets

NOT JUST FOR NERDS

more are faster

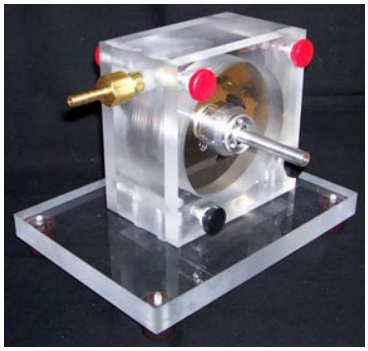
Nearly half (47%) of all adult Americans now have a high-speed internet connection at home, a February 2007 survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project says, up from 30% in early 2005. Seventy percent of surveyed individuals have a high-speed connection while 23% use dialup.

wireless-blocking "paint"

Tests in March 2007 confirmed that wireless transmission of information can be protected from unauthorized access by the use of EM-SEC Technologies Coating System which creates an "electromagnetic fortress."

aaggghhh!

When it all becomes too much and you're ready to snap, it's time to use the USB self-destruct switch. Activate the initiation switches, turn the key, flip the safety lid, and press the button. Result: Satisfying sonic destruction. Includes a 4-port USB 2.0 hub. From Cyberguys.



15,000 rpm tesla turbine

Build this project using your dead hard drives. http://tinyurl.com/2vl6m8

five terabyte drives

Around 2013, the gigabyte hard drive will become passé. A team of researchers at Toshiba and Tohoku University are working on Nanocontact Magnetic Resistance which may mean 5TB desktop drives and 1TB 2.5-inch notebook drives. Heat-Assisted Magnetic Recording (HAMR), now being developed, should eventually push storage density to 50 terabits per square inch by 2019.

how to get the *security tab in folder properties*

First, your hard drive must be formatted NTFS for this tab to show up.

Second, if you're running XP Pro, you must open Windows Explorer, go to Tools, Folder Options, View and uncheck Use Simple File Sharing.

Third, if you're running XP Home, Simple File Sharing is enforced by default and cannot be disabled. You must boot the computer into Safe Mode and log in with the Administrator account, in order to see the Security tab.

WARNING: Adjusting the permissions on a drive, file or folder can lock even the Administrator account out of that drive/file/folder. Deny Permissions take precedence over Allow Permissions, regardless of your group membership. Administrators are members of the User's group, by default. Uncheck Allow, rather than using Deny.

Source: http://www.dougknox.com/

how to make *outlook express* work better

Compact the folders. When you delete an email in Outlook Express, it is moved to the Deleted Items folder. The message disappears from its original folder, and when you empty the trash, it disappears from there, too.

In neither case is the message removed from the file on your disk immediately, however. Editing files for this is a slow process, and you'd have to wait or experience Outlook Express responding slowly whenever you deleted a couple of emails. This is why deletion merely hides the messages from view.

Of course, having all your deleted messages still on disk means a lot of space that can be reclaimed is wasted over time, and if Outlook Express has to keep track of too many obsolete messages this itself can mean a slowdown of certain actions.

So Outlook Express tries to remove these deleted emails physically from time to time. This it calls "compacting". Every 100 times you close Outlook Express, you are asked to start that process. You can manually compact folders by going to File/Folder/Compact All Folders.

Delete temporary files. Each time you display a message, either in a message window or in the Preview pane, Outlook Express creates a temporary file to help it display the contents of the message. Each of those temporary files is stored in the Temporary Internet Files folder that is used by Internet Explorer. Sometimes one or more files in this folder are damaged, and that can cause Outlook Express to exhibit strange symptoms when displaying messages. All the files in Temporary Internet files truly are temporary, so there is no danger in deleting them. Doing so will not delete the actual messages in Outlook Express. This is how to do it: Double-click on My Computer and right click on Drive C. Left click on Properties, and click on the Disk Cleanup button. Check the box Delete Temporary Internet Files. Click OK.

how to reinstall *internet explorer* in xp

Insert the Win XP CD. Open Start / Run and type: rundll32.exe setupapi, InstallHinfSection DefaultInstall 132 c:\windows\inf\ie.inf. Press Enter.

july keyword explained

Mozy is a secure, automatic remote backup service for any PC in any home. It's simple to install and configure. No external hard drive, expensive subscription services, CDs or DVDs to burn. All you need is a broadband connection and you are ready to go!

- 2GB of free, secure storage (Unlimited for $4.95/month)
- Open/locked file support
- Block-level differential backup
- 128-bit SSL support (secures your data during transport)
- 448-bit Blowfish encryption (secures your data on Mozy server)
- Continuous or scheduled backup options
- Multiple versions of any file kept 30 days
- Requires Windows Vista, XP, 200, or Mac OS X 10.4

how to identify a *phishing web site*

Is that web site legitimate? Don't be fooled by a site that looks real. It's easy for phishers to create web sites that look like the genuine article, with the logos and other graphics of a trusted web site.

Head over to Yahoo's Security Center for tips to identify phishing sites: http://tinyurl.com/2rwyog

the basics of digital imaging

by Neil Longmuir

Everyday camera users are jumping on the digital band wagon without finding out what's really involved in moving from a film camera to a digital camera. Digital cameras are being bought for one main reason. Cost of film and processing. Digital photography is simple, just point and shoot. It's not that easy. This article will discuss some of the basics of digital photography.

The first myth is to have as many megapixels as available. The truth is not all pixels are created equal. What really matters is the size of the CCD or CMOS sensor in the camera and whether the camera is a point and shoot or a digital single lens reflex. The pixels in a digital single lens reflex are larger. The basic rule is the larger the pixel, the better the image quality.

When you purchase your digital camera, ask the dealer to give you a short course on how to use it. Ask how to insert a memory card; how to set image quality. Inquire about the various white balance settings, don't just rely on the automatic settings. All of the current digital cameras are capable of producing very nice images with the correct settings.

The digital camera has been purchased. Do you have everything required for digital photography? The following is a list of the basic needs for digital photography.

- Do you have a computer?
- Did you buy a memory card?

Most digital cameras do not come with

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When you purchase your digital camera, ask the dealer to give you a short course on how to use it. Ask how to insert a memory card; how to set image quality. Inquire about the various white balance settings, don't just rely on the automatic settings.

a memory card. A good question to ask here is how many images will fit on the memory card?

- Do you have any image editing software? Ask your dealer if any image editing software comes with the digital camera.
- Do you have a CD or DVD burner to make backups of your digital images? Also, do you have the software to burn the CDs or DVDs?
- Do you have a card reader to transfer the images from the memory card to the computer?

handling memory cards

Regardless of the type of memory card that your camera uses, all memory cards must be handled with care. Read the camera manual to be sure you know how to insert the memory card. Remember, if inserting the memory card does not feel right or the memory card is hard to insert, then something is wrong. Forcing the card to fit could bend the pins in the camera. Be sure the camera is off before inserting or removing a memory card. Removing a memory card while the green light is still flashing can make that memory card unuseable again. Some images on the memory card may or may not be recoverable. Similarly, inserting a memory card into a camera while the camera is on can damage the electronics in the camera. Damage can also result when changing lenses on digital single lens reflex cameras when the camera is on.

Once images are on a memory card, how do you transfer them to the computer? There are several ways; connect a USB cable to the camera; remove the memory card and insert it into a memory card reader. Some of the latest memory cards have a built in USB connector which can be plugged directly into a USB port on the computer. Caution must be used when using any of these methods. Repeated plugging and unplugging a USB cable from a camera can create some major problems if it is not done gently. The circuit board inside the camera is fragile and the connection to the USB port is small. It's easy to break the connection inside the camera with repeated inserting and removing of a USB cable.

Removing the memory card from the camera and inserting it into a card reader works very well. But once again, caution is required. Do not force the memory card into the card reader or camera. Doing so could bend the gold pins which fit into the memory card. If you bend these pins in your camera, it is not covered by warranty.

Finally, plugging a memory card directly into a USB port requires caution. The USB connection on the memory card is very small and could easily be broken.

why is correct exposure important?

If your exposure is incorrect or your white balance is incorrect it means you will be spending more time on the computer correcting the images. As well, the changes you make to the original image may make it more difficult for your digital mini lab to print.

This is even more important if you're shooting JPEG images because correcting incorrect exposures or white balance can be very time-consuming.

what is white balance?

The question is, what is white balance? The color of light reflected from an object varies with the color of the light source. The human brain is able to adapt to changes in the color of the light source with the result that white objects appear white whether they are seen in shade, direct sunlight or under incandescent light. Unlike the film used in film cameras, digital cameras can mimic this adjustment by processing images according to the light source. This is known as "white balance." For natural coloration choose a white balance setting that matches the light source before shooting.

The following white balance options and color temperatures are available on virtually every digital camera:

Incandescent is used for indoor incandescent lighting. The color temperature (i.e. the color of the light) is between 3000 and 3200K. Incandescent lighting tends to be yellow or orange.

Florescent is used when the predominate light source is florescent lighting. The color temperature is approximately 4200K. Florescent lighting tends to show up in images as green.

Direct sunlight is used outdoors with subject that are lit by direct sunlight. The color temperature is approximately 5200K. Daylight is flat and generally without any color casts.

Flash setting is used with either the built-in flash or optional flash unit. The color temperature is approximately 5400 K. Using flash is very similar to direct sunlight or daylight.

Cloudy is used with daylight conditions under overcast skies. 6000K. Taking pictures on a cloudy day is like using a giant umbrella. The light is soft, shadows are generally non existent and colors are vivid. The colors are even more vivid if it has just rained.

Shade is used in daylight with

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subjects in the shade. The color temperature is approximately 8000K.

Take a few minutes to get the exposure and white balance correct. Before the event, take a few pictures and see how they look on the LCD on the back of the digital camera. Experiment, change a setting and take a few more pictures. Use the setting that looks the best to you.

JPEG files are processed directly in the camera. Note: editing and re-saving JPEG files reduces the quality of the image.

RAW is the unprocessed data captured by the digital cameras sensor. RAW is a file of data and has to be processed into an image before the file can be opened and viewed. If the images are shot in RAW, then a lot less time will be spent on correcting the images. The downside to shooting RAW files is they are larger than their JPEG equivalents. All RAW image converters offer the following options:

- White balance adjustment
- Color temperature and tint adjustment
- Exposure adjustment plus or minus
- Shadow detail
- Brightness and contrast
- Saturation

Some of the RAW image onverters give you the option of opening the RAW image in 8 bit or 16 bit mode. **Figure 1** shows the Adobe camera RAW converter. The Adobe camera RAW converter is the same in Adobe Photoshop Elements 3 and 4 and Adobe Photoshop CS2. Note at the top of the Adobe camera RAW converter there are three items in the upper right hand corner, preview, shadows and highlights.

Checking these boxes will display the appropriate areas on the image for preview. Note also that there are several icons in the upper left hand corner, zoom, hand, an eye dropper (white balance) and rotate the image 90 degrees counter clockwise and rotate the image 90 degrees clockwise. As you can see, there are some additional tools in the RAW camera converter that can speed up the process, if necessary. One final reminder, mini digital photo labs cannot print RAW images, be sure to save your image as a JPEG.

making prints from digital images

Recently I was in Costco and two elderly gentlemen were enjoying a hot dog and comparing pictures of their grand children. One gentlemen pulled out a half a dozen pictures and enjoyed showing them around. The other gentleman had a CD is his hand and said here's the pictures of my grand children. Of course, there were no pictures to be seen. To make things even worse, the second gentleman said the CD was totally useless because he did not own a computer.

The moral of this story is make some prints. Once you have taken your pictures and saved them to your computer, now is the time to make some prints to share with friends and family. Depending on the camera used to take the photos, the file sizes can range from 1.5 Mb to 4 or more mega bytes. To make a four inch by six inch print does not require a file this large.

All edit imaging software allows you to crop your images. Resize your images to four inches by six inches if that is the size you are printing. Use 300 dpi for the resolution. Do not write over the original image, give the resized image a new name. That name could be as simple as adding a c to the end of name to stand for cropped. It's a good idea to make a special directory on your hard drive for uploading images. Copy the images from the directory where you're

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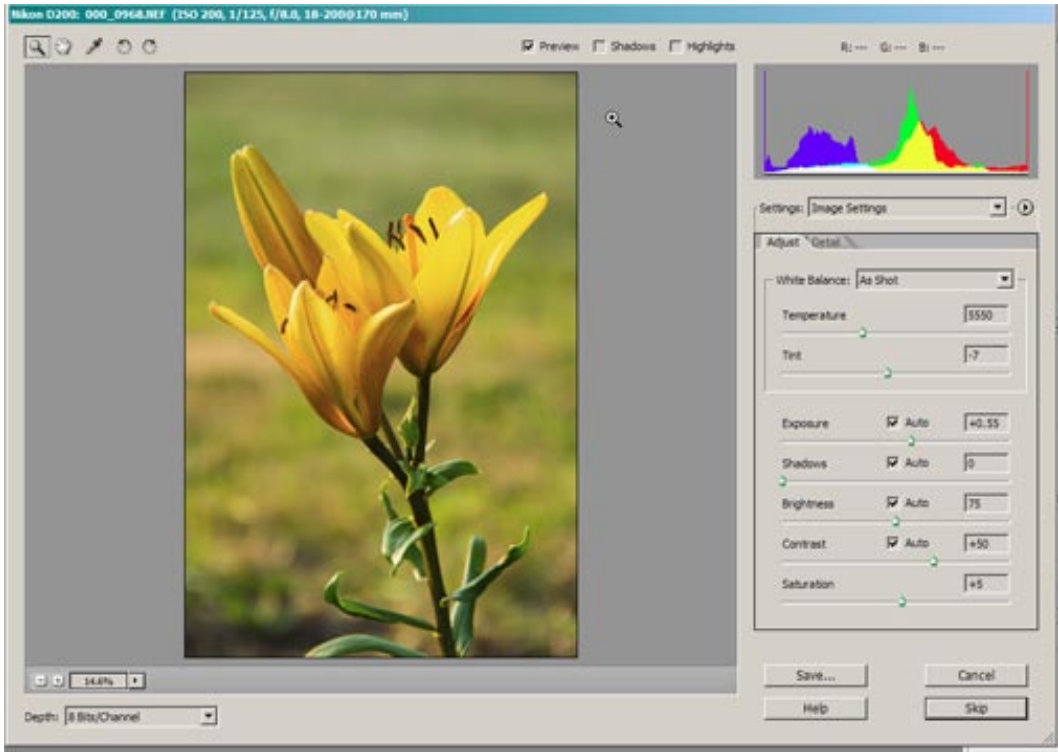
Figure 1



editing them to the special uploading directory.

upload images to online printing lab

Burning your images to a CD and driving down to a mini digital lab is time consuming. Also after loading them to the lab's mini digital lab requires either that you wait for an hour for your prints or you're coming back again at another time to pick up the prints. So uploading your images to your lab's online service will save you time and money. Also, some labs charge less for prints that are uploaded or they have specials which give their customers a price break at times.

Find a lab that you like and get all your work done there. If your prints are not what you expect, talk to the lab technician and ask how you can make your images better and easier for them to print. If you get your exposures and white balances correct, the mini lab should be able to make very good prints. The lab technician may make some minor adjustments, but that should make the prints even better.

The procedure for uploading your images to your online lab is generally as follows. First you have to login to their service. This will generally require your e-mail address as your User ID and you will have to provide a password. At this point make it easy on yourself, do not forget your password. It will only frustrate you and slow you down the next time you want to use the service.

Then you will be presented with a window that will ask you to upload your files. If you have your files in a special upload directory, then simply go to that directory and upload your files. Note, you may not be able to upload all your files at once. Their may be limits on how may files can be sent at one time.

Once all the files are uploaded an album of some form will be shown. Click on this album with the left mouse button and select the number of prints wanted of each, the size of print wanted, the finish wanted on the prints, glossy or matte surface and with or without borders. Some labs have special effects too. Click on the image which will bring up a large view of the image. Click on effects and select the one wanted. Also some labs allow images to be cropped, red eye removed and rotated. The bells and whistles will depend on the individual lab used.

Once all the above choices have been made, click on add to the Shopping Cart. This will generally show all the images and a summary of the cost of printing the images. Next, you will be asked the province, city and lab location where you will want to pick up your prints. Once you're finished, click on Checkout. This will give you a confirmation order number. Click done and exit the website.

When the images are ready for pickup, you will receive an e-mail that your order is ready for pickup.

burn a backup cd now!

Once you have all your images on the computer, it's time to make a backup. Use good quality CDs or DVDs for these backups. Use the CD burning software that you are familiar with. Software such as Nero or Roxio. Another alternative is to use the Windows XP CD wizard. Regardless of the software you're using, make a backup. If you are really happy with your prints, you may even want to burn the upload directory to the backup CD. I would suggest that you give the CD directory a different name to make it easy for you to identify. You do not want to lose any digital images. In film days, if you lost a picture, you simply took the negative or slide back to the lab and got a print made.

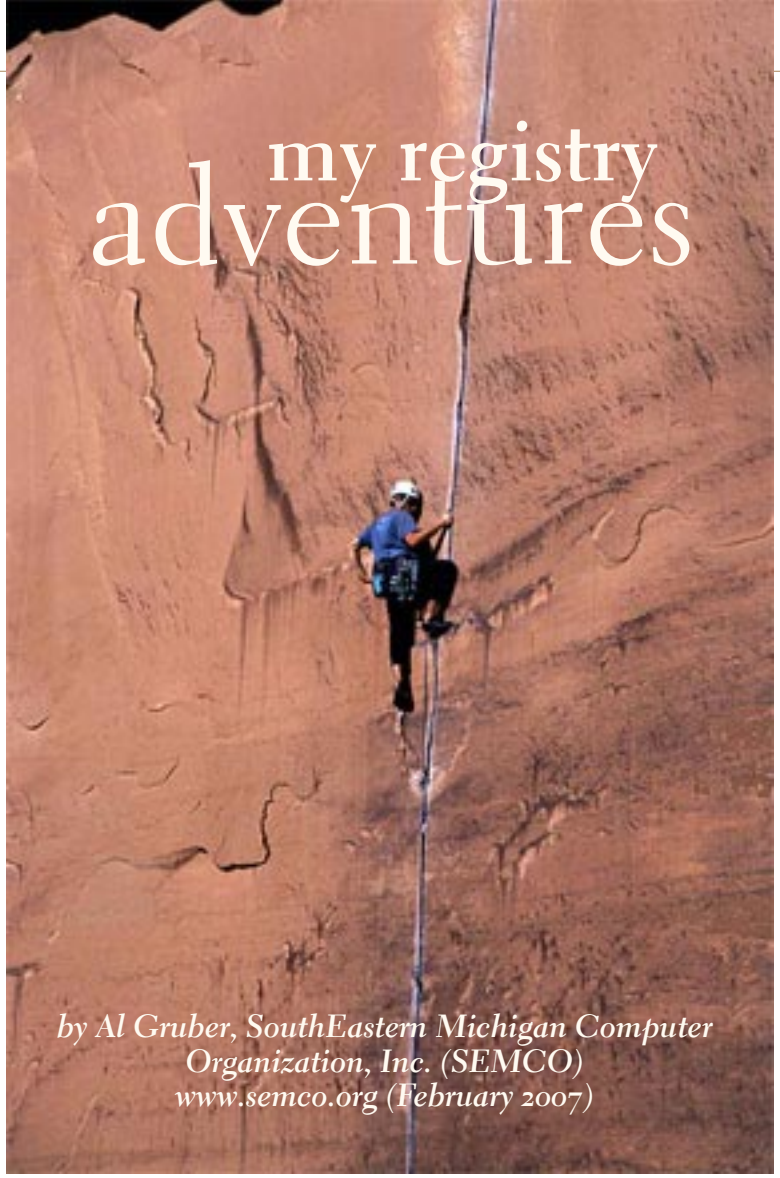
The final step is label the CD. Digital imaging requires backups!

conclusion

Finally when you have finished working with your images, put the memory card back in your camera. Make sure the camera is off before inserting the card. Format the card in the camera and you're ready to take some more pictures. One final word about digital cameras, check your batteries. If you do not have a spare set of batteries and you're batteries go dead, then your pictures taking time is over until your replace the batteries or charge the rechargeable batteries you have. It's a good idea to have at least one extra set of batteries. Also, do you have an extra memory card in case you fill the memory card in the camera?

Article and screenshot used with persmission of author. Neil Longmuir has been both a professional photographer and a hobbyist. He is a member of the Winnipeg PC Users' Group.

my registry adventures



by Al Gruber, SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc. (SEMCO) www.semco.org (February 2007)

Suppose you try to delete a file on your Desktop, but instead the system starts to install a program. You furiously click cancel a dozen times, and it stops. So, you try the delete again, and it happens again, and again, even after rebooting. Evidently, some wires are crossed in your computer: the delete key is now assigned to installing a program called ScanSoft PDF Create. That's what made me delve into the registry.

By way of background, I've had problems with ScanSoft ever since their last upgrade, so I knew enough to demand that they remove their setup program, and hallelujah, that did give me back my delete key. But it made sense to me that this fixed only the symptom. Somewhere in there, the wires were still crossed. And that somewhere must be in the registry. Unfortunately, I didn't know enough about the registry—and though I know a little more now, I still haven't fixed the problem.

To start, I pulled down my copy of Windows XP Registry Guide, (Jerry Honeycutt), which I had always planned to read "one of these days." It's a good book, but at over 450 pages, my mind wandered to the registry-cleaning program (System Mechanic 6) I had recently bought from ZoneAlarm. Their general idea is that they scan your computer for errors and then fix them. Not being that trusting, I finally found out how to stop them from making the fixes before I could review and approve them. Then I ran the program. Surprise, they had no proposed fixes. My Registry was perfect!

But I knew that was wrong. As I was following the Honeycutt book and inspecting the registry, I had discovered many out-of-date entries involving the Start > All Programs menu, some for programs I had uninstalled and others perhaps caused by my habit of combining programs under suitable headings. For example, I have a heading called Graphics that holds 10 different graphics-related programs.

When I asked the System Mechanic techie why their program might not find known registry errors, he explained that they must be shared programs, which I could pin down by running System Mechanic in protected mode. I did, and now found a grand total of 1 error.

I now decided to try some other registry cleaners. Here's a partial list of the commercial offerings: Error Nuker, Free Registry Fix, PC On Point, RegCure, Registry Fix, RegistryHealer, Registry Mechanic, Registry Medic, System Mechanic.

Unfortunately, most of these programs give off a bad smell. These are inexpensive programs; most in the range of $20 to $30, but they all try to give the impression that they're free: e.g., "free download," "free scan," but to fix your registry, you must pay. The most egregious is "Free Registry Fix," which claims on its opening screen: "the world's only FREE registry cleaning software on the market today." Their price is $29.95! Mind you, I understand their problem. Since I don't need registry cleanings very often, I might take my

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free cleaning without ever buying. But still, it's a shell game. And frankly, I am reluctant to give them my credit card. (Actually, there are at least 4 genuinely free programs, but they are a bit harder to find: CCleaner, EasyCleaner, RegScrubXp, Eusing Free Registry Cleaner.)

Another point is that the commercial product information is more hard sell than information. "Statistics show that over 93.7% of pc's have corrupted registries;" "Don't compromise with second best;" "100% guaranteed." If there are product differences, and there clearly are, I couldn't find them in their literature. And of course, their documentation is weak. This was especially disappointing because I was hoping their documentation would give me a clue about my problem.

These programs all use about the same approach. They offer to scan your registry (Free! Free! Free!). These scans invariably find lots of "dangerous" errors. To fix these, you must register the program, which is when you find out that it isn't free after all. The programs do give you one or two free fixes. But since all of them find hundreds of errors, you invariably have too many for their free offer. Incidentally, the program that claims to be the only freebie in the universe does give you 50 free fixes, but I don't think you qualify if you have over 50 errors.

After the scan, these programs go automatically into their repair phase, unless you have figured out how to opt out, which again took me quite some time. (The problem here is that they never tell you if choosing "fix errors" will still let you back out.)

So, after System Mechanic had said I had an error-free registry, here's the number of errors I found in the various programs:

Product and Errors Found	#
CCleaner (really free)	1,000*
EasyCleaner (really free)	251
Error Nuker	267
Free Registry Cleaner (really free)	1,651
Free Registry Fix	740
PC On Point	739
RegCure	2,374
Registry Fix	714
Registry Mechanic	430
Registry Medic	1,575
RegistryHealer	3,777
RegScrubXP (really free)	339
System Mechanic	0

* Estimate, no total supplied.

Now, I knew System Mechanic was wrong when they said I had no errors. But when Registry Healer says 3,777 there must be some grade-inflation going on. After all, my computer boots and runs ok. The ScanSoft problem is a suspicion at this point, not a blue screen emergency. So why should I let Registry Healer repair these errors. I suppose it would speed boot-up and shutdown. Would it actually run faster? The sales pitch says yes, but as I said, I'm not that trusting.

To give you a little more feel, here are the warnings from "Free Registry Fix": 274 high severity problems—apps won't run, system may crash. 121 medium severity—app errors or won't run. 345 low severity—computer will run slow.

This seems like a good time to tell what little I have found out about the registry. First, it is loaded into memory when the computer starts. The part we are interested in resembles a Rolodex, a list of programs and their addresses. Entries are added when you install a program, and removed when you uninstall.

Apparently, not all programs uninstall properly; some entries are not removed from the registry—outdated cards left in the Rolodex. This may create a junky registry, but should not automatically cause problems. Another factor is that programs often involve multiple parts, hence multiple entries in the registry. So, if each improperly uninstalled program had 10 parts, the amount of junk might be that much greater. But aside from the wasted time riffling through left-behind

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cards, no real harm should ensue. Even if you call a contact whose number has been disconnected, all that happens is a no-answer, i.e., the program won't run because you uninstalled it.

Finally, there are other ways to cause registry junk. If you occasionally reorganize your Start button > All Programs menu, it turns out that old entries are not deleted from the registry. Example: I moved Word from its old category called MsWord to a new one called Microsoft. In terms of the Rolodex analogy, this is like adding a card when a contact changes her name. If she keeps her phone both cards are usable, but the old one becomes superfluous as you switch to using her new name.

Are we getting any closer to understanding how a group of registry cleaners can be so far apart in the number of errors they find? Hold on. Registry cleaners conduct their scans by problem categories that they describe with names that are suggestive but by no means clear. I think that the differences in their results are caused by which categories they pick, and perhaps how tight their rules are. (Though it seems likely that System Mechanic contains some programming errors.) Here are my guesses as to what their categories mean:

typical registry errors categories

The first 5 items below are written into the registry at the time of program installation, but not always fully deleted at un-installation. Many registry cleaners offer to delete the useless left behind entries.

1. Software Locations: At installation, applications enter their location in the registry.

2. Controls/ActiveX files/Shared Dlls, Browser Helper Objects: Applications enter the location of their *.dll and *.ocx files in the registry.

3. Help Files: Some applications enter the location of their help files in the registry.

4. Installers/Add/Remove Programs: Applications enter the location of their install and uninstall programs files in the registry.

5. Start Menu and Startup (boot up) entries: At installation, applications enter the location of both of these items in the registry.

The following items are written into the registry at various other times. The cleaners check to see if they represent real addresses. If not, they are useless and can be deleted.

6. Windows Services: This tells the location of various Windows services.

7. Windows Fonts and Sounds: These sections tell the location of installed Windows font and sound files.

8. File Extensions: This lists file extensions (e.g.: *.txt) and tells which if any applications may open them. If an extension lists no programs, or only nonexistent programs, the entry is useless.

9. History List: This section is scanned for invalid history files paths.

10. Invalid Paths and Folders: this section is scanned for any other non existent files and folders.

11. Hardware Drivers

To summarize, I am guessing that looking for somewhat different errors causes cleaners to get different problem counts. This is only a guess because their product descriptions aren't that specific. Surprisingly, nobody claims to look for more problems than their competitors. I suppose, on these grounds, I should pick Registry Healer because it finds (and fixes) the most errors.

But then, I must face the question; should I let Registry Healer delete the "problems" it reports, so that my system won't crash (which it doesn't do anyway) and will run faster (which I suppose is possible)? I admit that part of my reluctance is fear. Whenever anybody mentions editing the registry, they first warn that you could cripple your computer for life, so back up first. And the registry cleaners themselves, of course, say that their software is not created for any useful legal purpose and that users cannot rely on them working.

Part of my problem is with the concept of backups. If my computer won't start after deleting the "problems," and if I had a backup, and, if I had a boot disk, and, if I could get into restore mode, I should be able to rescue the situation. But with my luck, the computer will start fine. Then three weeks later, some program I haven't run since the "cleanup" will not run. And three weeks is long enough (for someone with senior moments) that I probably won't connect it with the cleanup. And if I did, would I want to lose whatever new stuff I had done since then? No!

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This brings to the fore one missing feature of all the cleaner programs. My specific problem is a possible registry error involving ScanSoft. But the cleaner programs don't let me search for ScanSoft errors. They just report what they want to report, and on top of that, they all want to report something different.

Speaking of features, here are some of the differences I noticed between programs: As you know, the cleaners find and delete calls to missing programs. A couple however, also search for the missing programs, so they can correct the call if they find it. I don't know how successful this is, but it makes sense to me. Registry Healer is one of these. For the rest, when they say repair, they really mean delete.

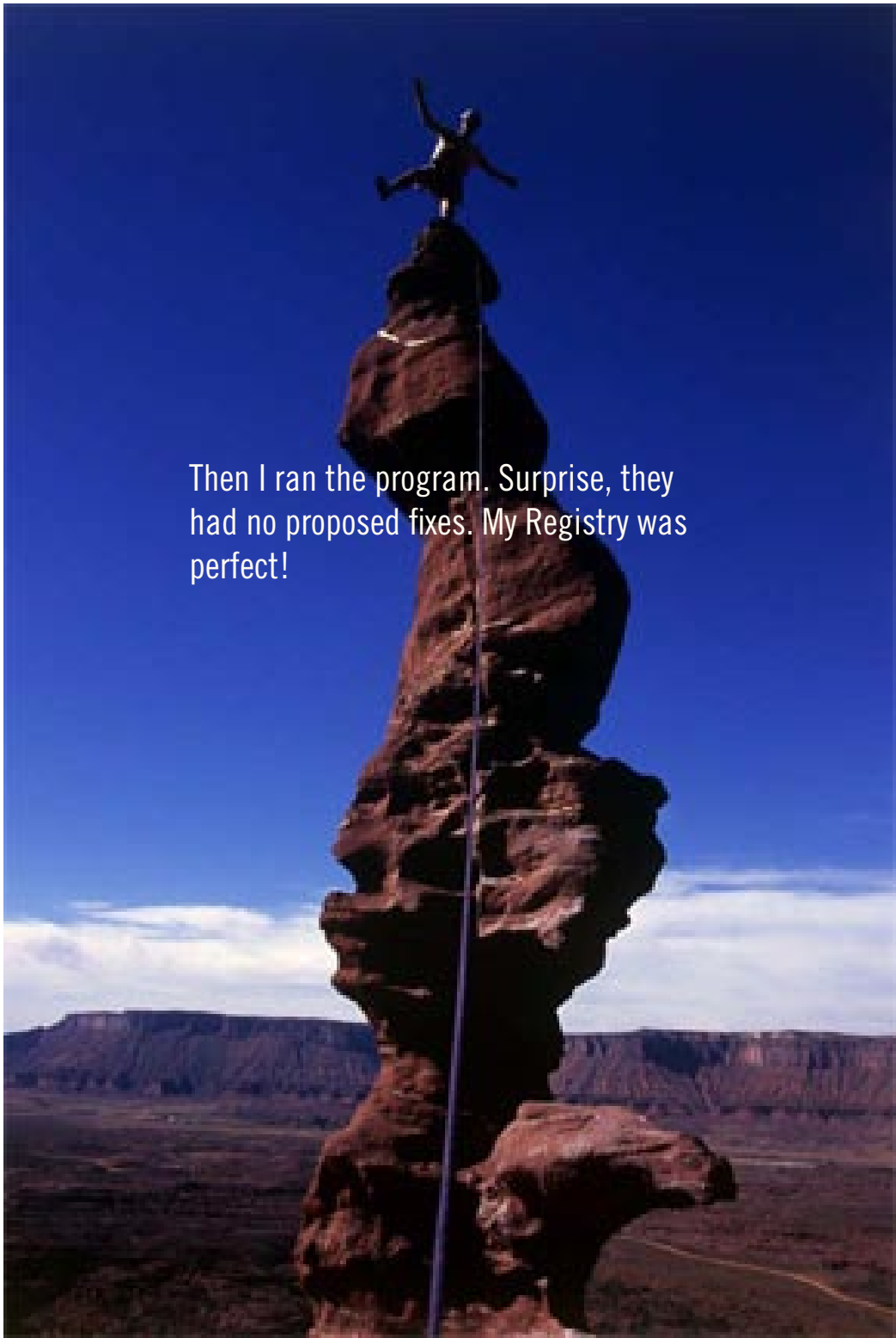
Another feature I like, is the ability to send a list of the errors to disk or printer. This caters to my cautious nature; it lets me think about the "problems" before agreeing to delete them. Registry Healer and EasyCleaner both offer this.

Another feature I found useful is that one click takes you from the error to the actual registry entry. Again, this reflects the fact that I was trying to investigate a specific problem, rather than running a housecleaning operation. About half the programs, including Registry Healer, offer this feature.

Finally, most but not all have some form of online documentation, though most of it is pretty amateurish. Their general rule is to explain the obvious (click scan to do a scan) (click cancel scan to cancel scan) but gloss over the mysterious, such as the purpose and implications of selecting certain registry categories.

Over the years, I have downloaded many trial versions of small-time programs, usually without knowing exactly what they are supposed to do, and why. If the documentation tells me why they made the program, that's a big plus in my purchase decision. And if it then explains logically and coherently how it works, I get confidence. If the documentation sounds smart, I believe the program is smart. By contrast, my problem with the registry cleaners is that they do lots of shouting but not much explaining.

Finally, as you know, I still have lots of questions. I am leaning toward Registry Healer, but haven't bought it yet. E-mail me if you have answers. Who knows, maybe we can do a sequel based on your expertise.



fix that fan

by Jim Sanders, NOCCC

Cheap (sleeve bearing) fans die young. Bet on it. The cheaper the system, power supply, cooler, etc., the cheaper the fan. A cheap ball bearing fan may be just as bad. When you hear that sleeve bearing fan (or a ball bearing fan for that matter) rattle, notice a fan is barely turning, or not turning at all, fix it! As shown in photo #1 of a fan out of a power supply, get the fan out where you can work on it.

On the side where the wires go into the middle, carefully peel back the label/sticker that covers the shaft area. The round item in the middle of the sticker in photo #2 is a metal hole plug.

The better fans have a rubber plug that seals well and is almost invisible at times. The really cheap fans don't have a plug over the shaft area. If the fan still turns without much effort, just oiling it may make it well again.

Apply a few drops of a good light machine oil such as, 3in1, Singer sewing machine, even ATF, but not the 30wt for your car engine, in the shaft hole. Sewing

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machine oil works well. Be careful not to get any oil on the surface where the label/sticker needs to be re-applied. This has to be put back in place to cover the opening and keep the oil in place.

If you get oil on the fan surface, it can be removed with acetone or MEK. If the label gets wrecked, I have found that on a clean surface a piece of black electrical tape works well. If you don't have a good applicator, see photo #3, use a toothpick. Spin the fan some to work the oil onto the shaft.

Re-assemble and you are likely to have a fan that quietly moves air again. If the fan is so gummed up that it is hard to move the blades, you will need to remove the retaining ring (C-ring) on the shaft. This allows the shaft to be pulled out of the bearing, see photo #4, so that both can be cleaned with a good strong solvent before oiling.

I like the effectiveness of Methyl Ethyl Ketone or MEK. A pipe cleaner works well for cleaning the inside of the bearing, especially on the smaller fans. Arguably, this is more work than it is worth, but it is not always easy to find a replacement fan. The video card fans and the motherboard chipset fans can be near impossible to locate. Even if you find a replacement fan, oiling the fan before putting it into service may be a good idea as manufacturers seem to be chintzy about the amount of oil in new fans.

P.S. — Clean the crude off the fan before you replace it. In fact, if you have access to an air compressor regulated at about 90 PSI, it is a great idea to take a blow gun attachment on the end of an air hose and blow out the entire system — keeping the tip about six inches away from parts. The little duster cans are better than nothing, but really don't have the horse power to do a good job.

Article and computer fan photos used with permission of the author. Jim Sanders is editor of Orange Bytes, North Orange County Computer Club's newsletter.

how to restore xp activation status info after a reformat

Double-click My Computer, and then double-click on the "C" drive. Navigate to the C:\Windows\System32 folder. Locate the files named "wpa.dbl" and "wpa.bak" and copy them to a safe location such as a USB key or CD. Reformat your disk and reinstall Windows XP on your reformatted hard drive, click "No" when asked if you want to activate Windows.

Reboot your computer into Safe Mode (press F8 as Windows is booting up to see the Windows Advanced Options menu and select SAFEBOOT_OPTION=Minimal). Double-click My Computer, and then double-click on the "C" drive again.

Navigate to the C:\Windows\System32 folder again. Locate the files named "wpa.dbl" and "wpa.bak" (if it exists) and rename them to "wpadbl.new" and "wpabak.new"

Copy your original "wpa.dbl" and "wpa.bak" files from your USB key, CD or DVD or other location into the C:\Windows\System32 folder. Restart your system.

submitted by Ted Wirtz

ted says:

I haven't tried this myself, but it sounds quite reasonable and simple. It comes from a newsletter called WXP News. Be sure to perform steps 1, 2 and 3 BEFORE formatting the disk. One thing I'm not sure of is whether USB, CD etc. drivers are activated when selecting the SAFEBOOT_OPTION=Minimal. It might be necessary to boot WinXP in normal mode, copy the files to a folder on the C: drive and then reboot into safe mode. Then the files can be copied from that folder in a manner similar to step 9.

how to make win xp last for the next 7 years

Read the Computerworld article at http://tinyurl.com/ypkgza

submitted by Tony Lake

by Ira Wilsker

improve computing pleasure with

free widgets for windows and mac

Many of us are extremely busy, and often lack the time to search the internet for items of frequent interest. Many of us have dull and boring desktops displayed on our monitors, often using the default images of our computer or software maker. Fortunately for us, there is a free service offered by Yahoo!, called "widgets."

Widgets, also known as "gadgets" by some web services, are small programs that display a wide variety of information on the otherwise wasted space on our desktops. This information is automatically updated on a frequent basis, providing the user with current data without loading another program or browsing to a website, as widgets are displayed on the desktop on a full time basis.

Widgets is the name for the products distributed by Yahoo!, and gadgets are distributed by other web service providers. While similar in appearance and function, widgets and gadgets are generally not interchangeable, and in order to conserve system resources, users should choose gadgets or widgets, but not both.

Yahoo!'s widgets can be found at widgets.yahoo.com. Upon opening that page, the user is greeted with a button to download the widget engine, which includes about a dozen popular widgets, including a picture frame (displays digital photos on desktop), weather display, notepad,

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Widgets can float free or be docked on top, bottom, or side of screen

daily planner, maps, stock ticker, and others. The opacity of widgets can be controlled to make them nearly opaque, hiding the desktop behind the widget, to almost totally transparent, fully displaying the desktop. Widgets can be dragged and dropped anywhere on the screen. I have a lot of icons on my desktop, and my widgets cover several of the icons, but this is not a problem as I drag the widget out of the way whenever I want to access those previously covered icons.

The widget engine works on Windows XP with service pack 2, Windows 2000 with service pack 4, Vista, or Macs with OS X 10.3.9 or higher. An internet connection is necessary in order to update the widgets, and 512 megabytes (minimum) RAM is recommended for improved performance.

Among the default widgets included with the widget engine, I personally have the stock ticker and weather widgets loaded and running, and also have a TV widget which displays the shows for the next few hours on the channels of my choice.

The stock ticker widget is very easy to use, and is automatically updated every few minutes. The default listings are for popular quotes, such as the Dow Jones Industrial Averages, NASDAQ, Yahoo!, and similar issues. It is very simple to modify the listing to show any desired quotes and indices, and the number of issues displayed is only limited by the space available on the desktop.

The weather widget is customizable for any city or zip code, and graphically displays the weather for five days, current conditions, temperature, and moon phases. By moving the cursor over the weather widget (sometimes it also requires a mouse click), a balloon opens which displays the humidity, barometric pressure, wind chill or heat index, wind direction and speed, and the time of most recent update.

The widget I seem to refer to the most is the TV widget called "TV Tracker," which can be downloaded from the Widget Gallery. Once downloaded and installed, a city and zip code is selected, which displays the on-air, cable, and satellite options and carriers locally available.

Selecting the appropriate carrier displays a two hour grid of what is on television. Different genres, such as sports and movies are highlighted in different colors for easy viewing.

Clicking on a highlighted title will "fetch" the description and details of the movie or sports event, displaying it in a sub-widget adjacent to the primary widget. I will be honest and say that there are several cable channels available to me that I simply never watch, and TV Tracker easily allows for the display of only selected channels, making the display that much easier to follow.

The widget gallery, widgets.yahoo.com/gallery, currently lists 4,242 Windows widgets available for download, and 3,977 widgets for Mac, in a variety of categories. As I type this, Yahoo! is featuring Motor Trend Magazine's "Gas Alert Savings" widget which displays a localized list of the lowest priced gas stations in the area, and is available for both Windows and Mac. Widgets can be searched by name, type, or date. The widget categories listed in the gallery are latest (4,242 widgets), updates (2,158 widgets), fun and games (575 widgets), date and time (470),

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WEBSITES
http://widgets.yahoo.com
http://widgets.yahoo.com/gallery

news feeds (952), system utilities (354), sight and sound (554), geek stuff (120), cam viewers (273), widget tools (63), app (application) enhancers (109), search tools (352), and various (miscellaneous, 416). Each category may contain hundreds of different widgets, all of which are available for free download.

I have downloaded several other widgets, and selectively load them when I want, and stop them when no longer wanted.

In Windows, widgets as a group can be controlled by clicking on the widget icon in the system tray, near the clock. The widget icon is a black background, with two diagonal and interlocked gears. Right clicking on the widget icon displays a comprehensive menu of options which allows the user to control the appearance and function of widgets, load and unload widgets, and otherwise control their behavior.

Some widgets that I selectively use are news feeds which display real time news headlines from hundreds of sources, live weather radar, streaming audio from dozens of radio stations from all over the globe, and many others. Although I have never used it, there is even a pregnancy calculator widget!

Widgets can be a fun adjunct to improve the satisfaction and use of our computers.

truth about **email petitions**

J. B. Hickey, Greater Tampa Bay Computer User Group

Email petitions are NOT acceptable to Congress or any other agency. To be acceptable, petitions must have a signed signature and full address. Almost all emails that ask you to add your name and forward on to others are similar to that mass letter years ago that asked people to send business cards to the little kid in Florida who wants to break the Guinness Book of Records for the most cards. It was just to get names and "cookie" tracking info for telemarketers and spammers to validate active email accounts for their own purposes.

Anytime you see an email that says, "Forward this to 10 of your friends," "sign this petition or you'll get good luck," has either an email tracker program attached that tracks the cookies and emails of those folks you forward to or the host sender is getting a copy each time it gets forwarded and then is able to get lists of "active" emails to use in spam emails or sell to others that do. FYI, if you want to forward stuff like this because it's interesting, take off all the "front" info and all the forwards and do NOT add your name to them. Forward this to others and you will be providing a good service to your friends and will be rewarded by not getting 30,000 spam emails in the future.

I always doubted that email petitions ever accomplished anything. Now I am going to delete all petitions no matter what they promote. If anyone can show me where a petition has ever had any results, I will reconsider.

NOTE: There are very few petitions that allow you to sign up on the Internet and those have specific websites you must go to in order to do so.

A note from Darry D: The successful salvaging of the TV show, "Jericho," was done by individuals bombarding CBS with emails. See the June 9 ExcelNet News.

internet's *filling up*

Information Week ("The Internet's Filling Up," Thomas Claburn, 24 May 2007, p. 24) states, "Around 2012 or 2013, the Internet will be full. "A coming shortage of IP addresses prompted the American Registry for Internet Numbers [ARIN] last week to call for a faster migration to the new Internet Protocol, IPv6.

"The current IPv4 allows for more than 4 billion (232) Internet addresses. Only 19% of IPv4 address space remains. IPv6 promises some 16 billion possible addresses (2128).

"'Unless action is taken now, a quiet technical crisis will occur, not unlike Y2K in its complications, but without a fixed date or high-level public attention,' Stephen M. Ryan, a partner at McDermott Will & Emery LLP and ARIN's general counsel, and Raymond A. Plzak, CEO and president of ARIN, say."

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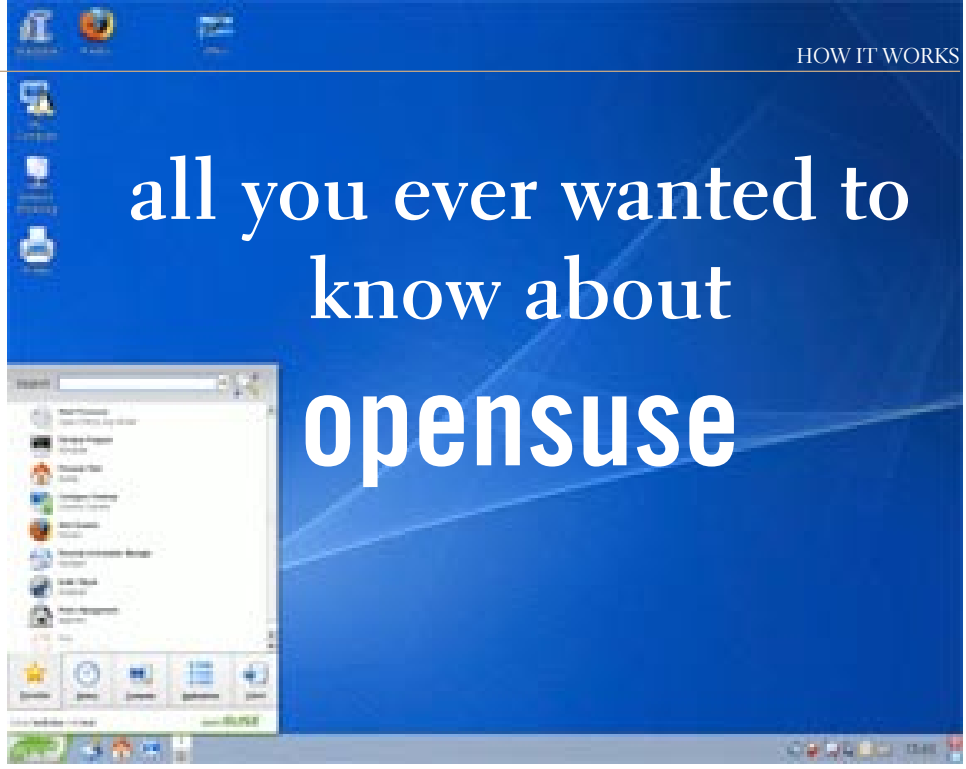

all you ever wanted to know about opensuse

third in a series of reviews of the top 10 linux distros

The beginnings of openSUSE date back to 1992 when four German Linux enthusiasts — Roland Dyroff, Thomas Fehr, Hubert Mantel and Burchard Steinbild — launched the project under the name of SuSE (Software und System Entwicklung) Linux. In the early days, the young company sold sets of floppy disks containing a German edition of Slackware Linux, but it wasn't long before SuSE Linux became an independent distribution with the launch of version 4.2 in May 1996. In the following years, the developers adopted the RPM package management format and introduced YaST, an easy-to-use graphical system administration tool. Frequent releases, excellent printed documentation, and easy availability of SuSE Linux in stores across Europe and North America resulted in growing popularity of the distribution.

SuSE Linux was acquired by Novell, Inc. in late 2003. Major changes in the development, licensing and availability of SUSE Linux followed shortly afterwards - YaST was released under the General Public License, the ISO images were freely distributed from public download servers, and, most significantly, the development of the distribution was opened to public participation for the first time ever. Since the launch of the openSUSE project and the release of version 10.0 in October 2005, the distribution became completely free in both senses of the word. The openSUSE code has become a base system for Novell's commercial products, first named as Novell Linux, but later renamed to SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop and SUSE Linux Enterprise Server.

Today, openSUSE has a large following of satisfied users. The principal reason for openSUSE getting high marks from its users are pleasant and polished desktop environments (KDE and GNOME), excellent system administration utility (YaST), and, for those who buy the boxed edition, some of the best printed documentation available with any distribution. However, the recent deal between Novell and Microsoft, which apparently concedes to Microsoft's argument that it has intellectual property rights over Linux, has resulted in a string of condemnation by many Linux personalities and has prompted some users to switch distributions. Although Novell has downplayed the deal and Microsoft has yet to exercise any rights, this issue remains a thorn in the side of the otherwise very community-friendly Linux company.

* Pros: Comprehensive and intuitive configuration tool; large repository of software packages, excellent web site infrastructure and printed documentation

* Cons: Novell's patent deal with Microsoft in November 2006 seemingly legitimised Microsoft's intellectual property claims over Linux; its resource-heavy desktop setup and graphical utilities are sometimes seen as "bloated and slow"

* Software package management: YaST graphical and command line utility using RPM packages

* Available editions: openSUSE for 32-bit (i386), 64-bit (x86_64) and PowerPC (ppc) processors (also a non-installable live DVD edition); SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop/Server for i586, IA64, PowerPC, s390, s390x and x86_64 architectures

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time for your membership renewal?

JUNE 1– Joe Melfi, Richard Metzger, Peter Romeo (2 months past due)
JULY 1– Joe Francis (1 month past due)
AUGUST 1– Stan Leese, Sid Liptz, Michael Moore
SEPTEMBER 1– Don Ogden, Leonard Prince
OCTOBER 1– Siles Bazerman, Gary Covington III, Larry Klees
NOVEMBER 1– Donald Bickel, Dan Gonse, Dick Tooley, Carl Westberg

submitted by Charlie Moore

july raffle winners

SmartComputing Buyer Guide $10
Ralph Seymour — Expired
Lloyd Boutwell — Winner
McAfee T-Shirt $5
Carl Westberg — Winner
SmartComputing Buyer Guide $10
Frank Bollinger — Winner
Norton 2006 Antivirus $39
Sid Liptz — Winner
SmartComputing Buyer Guide $10
Milton Gorham — Not present
Pete Romeo — Expired
Joe Melfi — Expired
Dick Tooley — Not present
Siles Bazerman — Winner
Pervasive flying disk $5
Walter Jackson — Expired
Bill McGraw — Winner
SmartComputing Buyer Guide $10
David Musser — Winner
PriceGrabber coin catch $5
Mike Lyons — Winner
SmartComputing Buyer Guide $10
Larry Klees — Winner
SmartComputing Buyer Guide $10
Don Ogden — Not present
Glenn Emigh — Not present
Michael Moore — Not present
Dick Tooley — Not present
Terry Schiele — Winner
System Mechanic Pro V6 $69
Milton Gorham — Not present
Joe Francis — Expired
Leonard Prince — Not present
Pete Romeo — Expired
Linda Gonse — Not present
Charlie Moore — Winner
McAfee mousepad $5
Leroy Kaump — Winner
SmartComputing Buyer Guide $10
Don Ogden — Not present
Linda Gonse — Not present
Ralph Seymour — Expired
Dick Tooley — Not present
Donald Bickel — Not present
Michael Moore — Not present
Ted Wirtz — Winner
AMD/MS bag $5
Dick Tooley — Not present
Donald Bickel — Not present
Don Ogden — Not present
Darryl Swensen — Not present
Glenn Emigh — Not present
Gary Covington III — Not present
Walter Jackson — Expired
Michael Moore — Not present
Leonard Prince — Not present
Harold Wann — Expired
Ralph Seymour — Expired
Ron Schultz — Not present
Pete Romero — Expired
Linda Gonse — Not present
Richard Metzger — Expired
Charles Burgwin — Winner
Tower cradle $20
Harold Wann — Expired
Stan Leese — Winner
2007 AMX Appoint. book $25
Ron Schultz — Not present
Glenn Emigh — Not present
Richard Metzger — Expired
Dan Gonse — Winner

Submitted by Charlie Moore

membership application

New Member ☐ Renewal* ☐

*Please fill out all the blanks to help us keep your information updated.

Last Name _____ First Name _____ Nickname _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Home Phone ( ) _____ Work Phone ( ) _____

Email _____ Interests/Comments _____

Meetings are the second Tuesday of every month. See www.orcopug.org for more details.

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secret keyword

The July keyword prize, a Coby CS-38 Portable AM/FM TV/ Weather Band Radio, goes into the prize pot with August's prize, Wiley's book "Repairing and Fixing your PC for Dummies." A new keyword is hidden somewhere in this newsletter or on the ORCOPUG website. If your name is called at the next meeting, correctly name the secret keyword, and win the prizes.

thank you

newsletter contributors!

Al Gruber, Carl Westberg, Charlie Moore, Charles Burgwin, Darry Eggleston, Gary Covington III, Ira Wilsker, J.B. Hickey, Jim Sanders, Ladislav Bodnar, Larry Klees, Linda Gonse, Mike Lyons, Neil Longmuir, Ralph Seymour, Ted Wirtz, Tim O'Reilly, Tony Lake

DEADLINE FOR SEPT. ISSUE IS AUG. 18

members' only! page

benefit of membership

ORCOPUG membership entitles you to access the Members' Only page at www.orcopug.org for special discounts. User name is first initial+last name (lower case). Password is member letter+number.

recycle ink cartridges for club fundraiser

Please bring your Hewlett Packard, Canon (BC-02, BC-05, BC-20 or BX-3), Lexmark, Dell, Compaq, Kodak, Samsung, or Sharp inkjet cartridges; or any laser cartridge to our next meeting for our ongoing fundraising project.

free item table **at august meeting!**

Bring your unwanted, computer-related items to the meeting and leave them on our free item table for anyone who wants to take them. Items can be books, magazines, hardware, or software. Members must label their items so other members know whom to talk to about any item. *Items not claimed by the time the original owner is ready to leave, must be taken home at the end of the evening.* We are not allowed to dump our items in the library's wastebaskets.

thanks to generous 2006 donators!

We sincerely thank the following companies for donating prizes to our 2006 fundraising raffle: 2nd Story Software, Adept Computer, Aviar Inc., AskSam, Help Me 2 Learn, Iolo Technologies, Millennia Corp., NotePage Inc., Pearson Education, Prolific Publishing, Smart Computing, Stardock Systems, and User Group Relations (Gene Barlow). Special thanks to: Charlie Moore and Mike Lyons for building a custom pc as the raffle's top prize, and to the Toshiba notebook donator.

get magazines at *discounts for user group members*

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Dr. Dobbs Journal	$15.95	—	—
Mac Addict	$10.97	$19.97	$28.97
Mac World	$152.95	—	—
Maximum PC	$ 9.95	$18.95	$27.95
Microsoft System Journal	$21.95	$39.95	—
PC Gamer	$12.95	$23.95	$33.95
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PC World	$16.95	—	—
Videomaker	$11.95	$21.95	—
Wired	$ 6.00	$12.00	$17.00

*Revised June 2007

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Orange County IBM PC Users' Group

computer users helping computer users

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- **Affiliation with worldwide group**

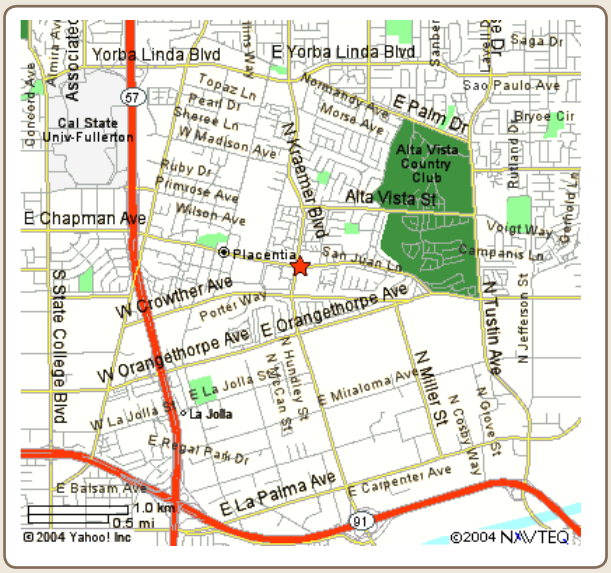
User groups represent the spirit of the frontier, a community getting together to do things that no individual ought to have to do alone. The pioneers of the American west got together for barn raisings, cattle roundups, and the occasional party. The pioneers of new technology get together for installfests, new user training and support, and just plain fun. Being part of a user group is the best way to get more out of your computer, and lets you make friends while you're at it.

Tim O'Reilly
President, O'Reilly & Associates

where are the meetings and when are they held?

Regular meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Placentia Library, 411 East Chapman Avenue. Placentia, California 92870, (714) 528-1906. Call (714) 990-0580, for information. Meetings are free and the public is welcome!

Planning meetings *are held the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. at Downey Savings & Loan, one block east of Harbor at Bastanchury in Fullerton. All members are welcome to attend planning meetings!*



next meeting: tuesday, august 14, 6:30 p.m. placentia library, placentia